

B's files

Report on Visitation to the
New England Foundation for Osteopathic Medicine
and
Saint Francis College
Biddeford, Maine

May 28, 1975

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Bureau of Professional Education

With the recent announcement of an affiliation between the New England Foundation for Osteopathic Medicine and Saint Francis College, Biddeford, Maine, and with the status of the Health Sciences Project sponsored by the New England Board of Higher Education and the Health Resources Administration of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Chaired by Mr. William Seldon, it was deemed advisable that a visit by the Chairman of the Bureau be made to evaluate the present status of the project to establish a New England College of Osteopathic Medicine, and to provide information as to the accreditation process of the American Osteopathic Association. The Chairman of the Bureau visited the campus of Saint Francis College, Biddeford, Maine, on May 28, 1975. At that visit, it was possible for the Chairman to meet with the Board of Trustees of the New England Foundation for Osteopathic Medicine, the liaison committee of the NEFOM and Saint Francis College, the President and Provost for the Saint Francis College, and the search committee for the position of Dean of the College of Osteopathic Medicine, Saint Francis College.

The announcement of an affiliation of the New England Foundation for Osteopathic Medicine and the Saint Francis College for the establishment of a New England College of Osteopathic Medicine has had a profound effect on the situation within New England. The announcement occurred at the same time the legislature of the State of Maine was considering a bill to establish a college of medicine in the State of Maine. The impact of the NEFOM/Saint Francis announcement apparently has contributed to the failure of passage of the bill for the establishment of a college of medicine in the State of Maine. Additionally, the announcement occurred at the time that Mr. Seldon was formulating his final conclusions and recommendations on the 18th month study of Health Sciences

Project, New Board of Higher Education. Mr. Seldon's report to date has established the fact that the osteopathic profession will probably not survive in New England without the establishment of a college and additional post-doctoral opportunities. Although his report does not strongly advocate the establishment of a college of osteopathic medicine, it is anticipated that the report will recommend that if a college of osteopathic medicine is founded in New England, that it be in a health sciences center in conjunction with optometry and podiatry. It is anticipated that his report will not support the establishment of a college of osteopathic medicine at a liberal arts college similar to the present Saint Francis model. The impact of this on the availability of funding from New England Board of Higher Education and/or other state legislatures in New England cannot be determined at this time.

During the visit, I reiterated that accreditation process required by the AOA for a college of osteopathic medicine. The relationship of the Council on Educational Development, the Committee on Colleges, and the Bureau of Professional Education, and the procedures utilized by each were outlined. The difficulties of obtaining pre-accreditation status were delineate. Of major significance to the Saint Francis project will be financial. The institution itself is presently undertaking a re-financing project to create stability of its liberal arts program. Resources are not available at the present time to develop a college of osteopathic medicine without federal, state, and foundation funds. The availability of these three sources is an unknown quantity at this time.

It would appear that in order for this project to become viable, it will require the development of a uniquely different and efficient educational program which will build upon new directions which Saint Francis is presently contemplating. It is gearing its baccalaureate program toward a career preparatory direction in the area of life sciences, human services and managerial studies. These new directions coupled with a college of osteopathic medicine might make it possible to establish a mini-health sciences center which could provide education to professionals in health care delivery for the unique

characteristics of New England. It is my opinion that a traditional osteopathic medical educational program would be extremely difficult to initiate at Biddeford, Maine. This unique educational program will require considerable innovative thought and educational expertise and will require the talents of creative people. There is an outside chance that this might have appeal both at the federal and regional levels.

The curriculum for this program will need to be developed and might well include aspects of both vertical and lateral mobility in the health sciences starting at the first year college level and ultimately culminating in doctoral degrees in osteopathic medicine. Again this will require creative and innovative curricular design and development.

A faculty to implement this program will have to be developed. There are apparently a small cadre of dedicated faculty individuals within Saint Francis but there are few if any individuals available who could participate in a graduate medical education program. The faculty for the college of osteopathic medicine will therefore need to be imported. It will require the recruitment of faculty individuals interested in innovative and different educational programming. This opinion is based upon the fact that I doubt that traditional medical education is viable at this location. The use of clinical faculty members within the hospitals of the osteopathic profession in Maine will be essential. Because of the limited number of hospitals and teaching faculty available, it will require almost a 100% participation of the profession to implement a program of any stature. There appears to be a considerable amount of interest and enthusiasm with the osteopathic physicians in the area to participate in this program on a voluntary basis. Voluntary faculty have long been the backbone of osteopathic education, but are also entirely dependent upon strong educational leadership to be effective. Some unique educational experiences might well be developed in smaller hospitals in the area and in the offices of physicians in rural communities. These educational programs will require careful development and evaluation. The volunteer faculty will require a large amount of in-service training.

As previously stated, the funds to initiate this program are not presently available. The present conceptual design to depend in a large measure upon federal funds does not seem to be fiscally sound. There will need to be developed a base for ongoing continued support of the educational program. This will best come from the New England Board of Higher Education as the educational compact does provide for support to medical education. Whether or not NEBHE would be supportive of this project in view of the present Seldon study is unknown at this time. It seems essential that some form of capitation state support must be obtained. Whether or not a fund raising program from private foundations would yield the funds necessary is also questionable at this time. It is my impression that the administration of Saint Francis College is well versed in educational fiscal affairs and in budgetary preparatory and management. This will be a helpful asset.

Ongoing evaluation of the program will require considerable thought and study. It is obvious that a program in osteopathic medicine will be only possible if scattered throughout New England. Evaluation of students in distance hospitals and in private physicians offices is difficult educationally, although not impossible by any means. An ongoing self-study of this new direction of Saint Francis and the college of osteopathic medicine will of course be necessary.

The proposed entering class of 50 for the fall of 1976 is in my opinion impossible. An entering class size of 16-20 seems much more feasible from an educational prospective. Certainly a monumental amount of work will be required in order for a September 1976 date to be possible. It seems far more educationally sound to consider 1977 at the earliest.

It is my impression that there are a number of dedicated and interested people involved in this project and their enthusiasm might well make it possible to be fulfilled. They will need some consultative advice from professionals in the field of considerable experience in order to accomplish their task. They will require immediate acquisition of additional skilled staff support. Perhaps the acquisition of a Dean and some additional

supportive staff will provide some of the educational leadership that they need.

As a personal observation, I have had some contact with this project since 1971 when the osteopathic profession was originally discussing the possibilities of a college with Northeastern University. It has been my personal opinion that a college in New England would be most valuable if not essential for a national strategy of osteopathic education. The need for a stronger base on the east coast, particularly in New England, for osteopathic medical education seems to me to be a high priority. Because of the leadership provided by New England in the area of education, finance, and national politics, it would appear that osteopathic education needs to be more visible in that area than it has been in the past. The osteopathic profession in New England has a strong osteopathic heritage which should not be lost by the profession. There are limited resources in the form of practitioners, and osteopathic hospitals but they might be adequate to initiate a program from which growth could occur. I have stated in the past and will now reiterate, a New England College of Osteopathic Medicine would be a marginal project but certainly stronger than some of our recent experiences. It is also my impression that prolonged delay in the establishment of a New England College will only reduce its marginal resources. Whether or not the present proposal will be able to be accomplished is unknown at this time. It appears, however, that they have embarked upon a course of action, the success of which only time will tell. I wish them well and good luck. They will need it.

STUDENT INQUIRIES TO NECOM
By Geographic Location

Maine	76
New Hampshire	6
Vermont	12
Massachusetts	122
Rhode Island	46
Connecticut	30
Outside of New England	119*

*Includes	New York	35
	Pennsylvania	13
	Michigan	6
	New Jersey	19